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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A GROUNDED THEORY CONCEPTUALIZATION OF RADIO PSYCHOLOGY

BY

MARILYN HOPE PHELAN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

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The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled A grounded theory conceptualization of radio psychology submitted by Marilyn Hope Phelan in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to develop a conceptual framework for understanding and describing the experience and impact of being a regular listener to a radio talk show.

Grounded theory methodolgy was used for the research because very little empirical work exists in the area, and generation rather than verification of theory was the goal of the research. Data for the research were tape recordings of 11 of the radio programs and transcripts of unstructured face-to-face interviews with seven regular listeners to the program, "That's Living". These were analyzed paragraph by paragraph, and each meaning unit was categorized. When no new categories were being identified, coding was halted. In all, 136 categories of meaning were coded, supported by a total of 925 examples of their occurrence. Categories were sorted into themes and the themes were linked to form the basis of a grounded conceptualization of the radio talk-show phenomenon.

The core categories distilled from the radio program related to the sense of community and connectedness created among listeners, the informing and teaching activities of the hosts, and the facilitative and therapeutic strategies used by the hosts. Listeners perceived the program as having value for them, they perceived a sense of relationship with the hosts, and they experienced a sense of belonging and community among listeners to the program.

The theory which emerged from the data suggests that the program hosts create an environment where personal growth and movement flourish because they establish themselves as trustworthy, knowledgeable and caring. The hosts employ a vast repertoire of teaching and facilitating skills. Listener engagement is selective in that individuals are likely to respond more vigorously to those messages, learnings, and themes which are most relevant to them.

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I. INTRODUCTION

From the time of its inception in the early 1960's, radio talk-show psychology has become an increasingly popular and influential force in the lives of an indeterminate number of North Americans. It is estimated that there are some fifty media psychology programs in North America currently, one only of these in Canada. Members of the psychology profession have debated the ethics of the caller-psychologist dialogue which, some have speculated, may trivialize and exploit human misery for the entertainment value (Keith-Spiegel & Koocher, 1985; Klonoff, 1983; Larson, 1981; Oglov, 1984). A more recent and growing professional point of view favors the educative, supportive, problem-solving, and referral functions of the radio psychology talk-show, for both callers and listeners (Grasha & Levi, 1983; Paterson & Janzen, 1987b; Ricks, 1984; Ruben, 1986). Unquestionably, the proliferation of the phenomenon has extended the domain of the psychologist beyond the privacy of the office and laboratory to the homes, businesses and automobiles of vast listening audiences.

Need for the Research

An array of needs for undertaking research in the area of media psychology can be documented. In general, the potential of the mass media as a vehicle for exerting positive influence, through the dissemination of a growing body of psychological knowledge, warrants investigation. Moreover, even though the

psychology and mass media bodies of knowledge and research are separately extensive, their convergence in media psychology is neither theoretically nor empirically developed. Finally, there is little understanding of what transpires when a listening audience of thousands participates daily in a mass media program which addresses the issues and problems of daily living.

The notion of somehow using psychological knowledge to ameliorate the human condition is well-developed in the literature. Miller (1969) challenged psychologists to "give...away" (p. 1071) their knowledge in the needy social climate of the times. He warned that the empirical tradition of psychology was standing in the way of social innovation (p. 1072). More recently Cowen (1982) concluded that human beings have a universal "need to seek help and comfort when troubled" (p. 392), and that the vast majority do not obtain professional help at these times. The establishment of the Division of Community Psychology by the American Psychological Association in 1966 was a significant acknowledgement of the need for psychology "to deal with persons and communities in their natural habitats" (Iscoe, 1974, p. 607).

The potential of the mass media, in general, as a vehicle for exerting positive influence has been widely discussed. McCall and Stocking (1982) urged psychologists to collaborate

with journalists and the media and to view them as potential partners in the dissemination of psychological research. The media, then, was the bridge between the knowledge the public needed and the positive regard aspired to by the profession. Similarly, the potential of the media to enhance the role of psychologists as consumer educators and social commentators has been explored by Klonoff (1983, p. 847). Canter and Breakwell (1986) envisioned psychologists in more active and deliberate interaction with the media as a means of conveying the important findings of the discipline, as well as exerting more social and political force.

The literature which bridges the gap between psychology and the mass media may be categorized as follows:

1. Descriptions of specific radio psychology shows have been reported by the psychologist or psychiatrist host(s) (Grasha & Levi, 1983; Oglov, 1984; Paterson & Blashko, 1985a, 1985b; Paterson & Janzen, 1987a, 1987b; Paterson & Kovach, 1988; Ricks, 1984; Schwebel, 1982). These practitioners, without exception, view the radio call-in show as a powerful means of reaching a wide audience with useful information, expertise, support and assistance in decision-making and problem-solving.

2. Empirical studies identifying specific behavioral change subsequent to media exposure have also been reported. For example, various media have been effectively employed in

a smoking cessation program in Finland (McAlister, Puska, Kosekela, Pallonen, & Maccoby, 1980; Puska et al., 1985); in a cardiovascular health program in California (Farquhar et al., 1977); and in a stress prevention and relaxation program in Canada (Borgeat & Chalout, 1985).

3. One empirical study comparing and contrasting listeners, callers, and non-listeners to a radio psychology show along such demographic variables as geographic location, age, sex, and knowledge of psychology was offered by Bouhoutsos, Goodchilds, and Huddy (1986).

4. Discussions of the potential ethical issues arising from the conflicting goals of psychology and the media have highlighted the danger of exploiting or trivializing problems for entertainment value (Keith-Spiegel & Koocher, 1985; Klonoff, 1983; Larson, 1981; Oglov, 1984).

In summary, the media psychology literature may be described as embryonic. On the one hand, there is excitement about the potential of the radio medium as a vehicle for exerting positive influence on the lives of thousands of listeners. There is also mounting evidence that this medium is effective in increasing health-related self-care in large scale media programs directed at behavioral change. On the other hand, there have been calls for caution related to the inherent conflict in goals between those who help and those who entertain. Clearly there is no conceptual framework to

understand nor to describe why thousands tune in to media counselling programs every day, and how they are affected. It was to the need for the discovery of theory to account for this remarkable trend that this research was directed.

Methodological Framework

The purpose of this research was to develop a conceptual framework for understanding and describing the experience and the process of listening to a radio psychology talk-show. The significant variables in this experience have not yet been identified, rendering traditional, quantitative, positivistic research inappropriate. Before the meaningful empirical questions of "How much?" and "In what direction?" can be investigated, the theoretical question of "what?" must be extracted. In the absence of the requisite conceptualization and instrumentation for empirical research, a qualitative research methodology was employed.

Grounded theory methodology was used because the focus of the investigation was on a process which was assumed to exist about which little had been articulated. Since little research had been conducted in the area of talk-show psychology, the relevant variables had not yet been identified, and could therefore not be measured. The question, "What is going on here?" (Field & Morse, 1985, p. 34) had not been satisfactorily answered. In contrast to quantitative research where already-developed theory is tested and deductively

analyzed, in this qualitative approach, data were inductively analyzed and then theory grounded in the emerging patterns. The research was conducted in a naturalistic setting with no experimental controls imposed.

The field research was conducted in the studio with the two psychologist hosts of the radio psychology talk-show program, "That's Living", and in the homes of listeners to the one and one-half hour program, offered five afternoons each week in a large Canadian metropolitan area. The Board of Broadcast Measurement (1988) estimates a listening audience of approximately 25,000 in any given 15 minute segment of the program. Two psychologists each host two programs per week, while the fifth program is hosted by a psychiatrist. Hosts open each program with five to seven minutes of opening comments addressing a particular topic and then open the telephone lines to callers. The data gathered in this research were recordings of the radio program, transcripts of interviews with listeners to the program, and the researcher's field notes.

The Research Questions

The research was guided by three questions:

1. What attracts listeners to the radio psychology talk-show?

2. What aspects of the talk-show are significant for the listeners?

3. What effect does the listening have upon the sample of listeners selected as informants for the research?

Overview of the Dissertation

The remaining chapters of this dissertation are organized as follows: Chapter II provides a backdrop for the research. While grounded theorists assume that the object of the research is to generate theory, they further make connections, where relevant, to existing theory (Turner, 1981). Field and Morse (1985) summarize the divergence of views about literature reviews by grounded theorists. On the one hand are the orthodox grounded theorists who suggest that when field work is preceded by a literature review, the researcher risks being distracted by his or her assumptions at the outset of the research (Glaser, 1978). At the other extreme are those grounded researchers who examine all existing literature and use it as a foundation for their own research question, thereby risking invalid results if the previous research was faulty, or only tangentially related to the question at hand. This research was based on the more moderate approach recommended by Field and Morse (1985) and Turner (1981) which involved a critical examination of previous work in the area of media psychology, as well as works with potential relevance from the mass media literature. In grounded theory research, there is a caveat that particular literature may emerge as significant only after data

collection and analysis have occurred since theoretical constructs are not hypothesized at the outset. In Chapter III, a rationale for the use of grounded theory methodology is developed, along with an explication of the grounded theory process. Its applications to this research are fully developed, including gaining access to the population and selection of informants; simultaneous data collection and analysis, including recording, labelling, and classification; and the development of central themes. Issues of reliability and validity are also addressed. The data derived from transcriptions of interviews and emerging themes are presented in Chapter IV. The grounded theory is presented in the final chapter, along with implications for future research and for the practice of media psychology.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Rationale for the Approach to the Literature Review

The grounded theory model rests on the assumption that "theory emerges from the inquiry" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 224). The method "stresses discovery and theory development rather than logical deductive reasoning which relies on prior theoretical frameworks" (Charmaz, 1983, p. 110). Consequently, grounded theorists do not look to the existing literature in the formulation of their theories but rather to the data which emerge from their research. There are varied interpretations as to "the extent to which the literature should be used to guide qualitative research" (Field & Morse, 1985, p. 34). Those grounded theorists who practice an orthodoxy of approach do not consult the literature at all at the outset of the research since they may be creating biases for themselves which may result in untrustworthy results (Glaser, 1978). Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988) suggest avoiding the literature until "the investigation is finished and [the] grounded theories are in place" (p. 141). Only then are existing theories evaluated for fit with the grounded theory.

A more moderate position about examining previous research is taken by others. Turner (1981) is critical of Glaser's and Strauss's (1967) work because of its overemphasis on ignoring existing theory even though he, like Glaser and Strauss, recognizes that the "questions and

propositions arising from the researcher's own detailed examination of a body of data....[are] the criteria for deciding whether or not existing *theory* has anything useful to contribute" (p. 239). Miles (1979) points out that "the need to develop grounded theory usually exists in tension with the need for clarity and focus" (p. 591), and advocates for developing a rough conceptual framework at the outset of the research so that sense can be made of the data later on. Similarly, Conrad (1978), in his grounded study of academic change, begins the research by examining four models which have been used to explain academic change but which have limitations. Essentially, he looks to the existing research in the manner suggested by Field and Morse (1985): "Previous research is critiqued and the researcher demonstrates how the present project will compensate for shortcomings in previous research and will add to present knowledge" (p. 39). It was this second more moderate approach to the literature review which was taken in this research. As suggested by Field and Morse (1985), the existing literature was used as a guide only in creating new theory, not as a basis for the design of the research.

The body of literature related specifically to media psychology is narrow. While "media" and "psychology" are separately massive bodies of knowledge, the combined domain is limited to a growing number of descriptive works, and a

smaller number of empirical ones. Since central research questions in this research are related to the attraction and effects of the radio psychology talk-show, the mass media literature was surveyed for an understanding of the approaches to determining media effects that have been taken. In keeping with grounded methodology, the "selective" (Stern, 1980, p. 22) literature review was viewed as providing a background, not a direction or "shape" (Charmaz, 1983, p. 110) to the research. This review then includes the descriptive and empirical work in the area of media psychology, and selective contributions from the mass media literature.

Descriptive Literature

Specific to the medium of the radio, there are a growing number of articles highlighting various radio psychology/ psychiatry talk programs (Grasha & Levi, 1983; Janzen, Lang, & Paterson, 1987; Oglov, 1984; Paterson & Blashko, 1985a, 1985b; Paterson & Janzen, 1987a, 1987b; Paterson, Janzen, & Block, 1988; Paterson & Kovach, 1988; Rice, 1981; Ricks, 1984; Ruben, 1986; Schwebel, 1982). These articles are descriptive, anecdotal, and rich with the potential of the connection between listening audience and host.

A series of articles related to the radio program which is the subject of this research provides extensive information about the following: (a) range of topics covered (Paterson & Blashko, 1985b; Paterson, Janzen, & Block, 1988; Paterson &

Kovach, 1988), (b) areas of apparent intrigue for listeners and callers (Paterson & Blashko,1985b; Paterson & Janzen, 1987b), (c) assumptions and strategies of the hosts (Paterson & Janzen, 1987b; Paterson & Kovach, 1988), (d) apparent functions of the program (Paterson & Janzen, 1987b); and (e) ethical issues (Paterson & Janzen, 1987b; Paterson & Kovach, 1988). Of particular significance for this study were the views of the hosts about the workings of their functional relationships with the audience, as reflected first by the kinds of calls generated and, second, by the nature of the helpful responses to those calls. It is the impression of Paterson and Janzen (1987b) that the majority of callers are seeking expert opinion to assist in decision-making arising from marriage, work, and family concerns. Related to this problem-solving, decision-making thrust are callers' needs for information about resources available in the community, and for clarification of technical information they have acquired elsewhere. The most central question of all, for this research, concerned what it is that attracts and impacts the listening audience. Paterson and Janzen (1987b) hypothesize that their role is more educational than therapeutic, and that their responses to callers are empathetic and congruent.

In a similar vein, Grasha and Levi (1983) frame the educative function of talk-show radio as its most significant contribution. They suggest that listeners learn something

about human behavior, that is, why and how others behave as they do. Listeners also experience the support of knowing that others have experienced and coped with problems similar to their own. They hear alternative points of view about emotionally-laden topics and may also learn alternative means of coping with their issues. They may become better consumers of help as they learn that professionals sometimes disagree with one another. And finally they may feel empowered by the knowledge that their personal point of view is often consistent with that of the professional.

Schwebel (1982) describes his role in assisting listeners and callers to cope with their difficulties as a facilitative one. Based on the assumptions that many people require support and direction in their decision-making and problem-solving, and possess the capabilities for resolution of their problems, Schwebel sees the media psychology link as having rich possibilities. In a similar vein to Paterson and Janzen (1987b), Schwebel (1982) emphasizes the provision of expert information about the issue, and the identification of available resources as key variables in facilitating coping behavior on the part of the listening audience.

The provision of social support has also been identified as a significant offering of radio talk programs. Ricks (1984) argues that the traditional model of psychotherapy as applied to media psychology is significantly limiting, in that "the

particular contractual arrangements that exist between a client and a therapist" (p. 13) are quite distinct from the obligations and communications which occur on interactive radio. Furthermore, the concern of the therapist is to treat while that of the broadcaster is to inform. Ricks suggests that the most important contribution of interactive radio is that of social support, which in turn benefits emotional health. Specifically, listeners become joined in a network with other listeners and with on-air personalities; they receive information and help, either through anonymous participation or through active involvement in the program; and they are provided with an opportunity to share their experiences with others. Ricks points out that these opportunities are the basis of social support which is positively related to personal well-being.

Empirical Literature

There is limited empirical work in the emerging area of radio psychology. The focus of one group of studies is the identification of the demographic features and the listening and calling motivations of the audience. The focus of a second group of studies is specific behavioral change as a measure of the effectiveness of media psychology programs. In the former group is a recent study by Bouhoutsos, Goodchilds, and Huddy(1986) who compared listeners, callers, and nonlisteners to radio psychology programs in New York and Los Angeles.

While the authors were cautious about their findings because of their sampling procedures, they found that an astonishing 49% of their sample of shopping mall patrons listened to or watched call-in media psychology programs. The most frequently chosen reason for listening related to the educational value of the experience, with the desire for information to apply to their own lives the second most common reason for listening. Listeners and nonlisteners were not distinguishable on the demographic variables of gender, ethnic distribution, age, marital status, educational level, or employment status. Nor could listeners be distinguished from nonlisteners on the basis of their psychological knowledge, although the listeners *thought* they were more knowledgeable. Furthermore, the two groups did not differ significantly on their responses to two questions about their psychological well-being. Callers, on the other hand, were significantly different from listeners and nonlisteners on several variables. Callers spent more time than listeners listening to their program; they were less likely to be married and more likely to be living alone; they were less likely to be employed and were less well-educated; and there were more women (65%) in the caller sample than in the listener sample (51%). More of them had sought psychological help in the past, and they were less positive than listeners on questions pertaining to their psychological well-being. Certainly this inaugural research

piqued this researcher's curiosity about the nature of the attraction and impact of the media psychology program for what is apparently a vast listening audience.

The focus of an earlier study from the mass media literature, carried out by Bierig and Dimmick (1979), was verification of the hypothesis that callers to a late night Chicago open-line program were seeking human contact. Callers to the program were less likely to be married, more likely to live in a single person household, and less likely to have membership in an organization than the population at large. Being unmarried was the best single predictor of frequency of calling. For Bierig and Dimmick, a major question arising was that of how listeners and callers would compare not only on their use of the media but also on the gratifications derived from it.

Tramer and Jeffres (1983) had a similar concern "with the motives that led people to the media and the gratifications that audiences derived from the experience" (p. 297). They queried the motivation of talk radio program callers. Notwithstanding the limitations of their survey instrument, their findings were similar to those of Bierig and Dimmick (1979) (see above). Companionship seeking was at the basis of the greatest number of calls, that is, the primary gratification gained from calling was companionship.

Monaghan, Shun Wah, Stewart, and Smith (1978) examined the potential of talkback radio as a change agent in community mental health through a survey and structured interviews. They found that callers to a radio psychology program in Brisbane, Australia "had no one else to turn to" (p. 353), and that they perceived their call as "the first move towards a solution of their problem" (p. 353). However, a survey of the general public for their perception of the usefulness of talkback radio revealed that it was ranked low in comparison with other sources of help. The authors concluded "that talkback radio has an undervalued and generally unrecognized contribution to offer the field of community psychology through its access to the populace" (p. 355).

Other empirical studies focus on specific behavioral change as a measure of the effectiveness of media psychology programs. Two major examples of health campaigns in which the mass media have played a significant role are now discussed. Both are concerned with cardiovascular disease prevention, one in California and one in Finland.

The Stanford Heart Disease Prevention program was initiated in the mid-1970's to test community-wide primary prevention programs (Farquhar et al.). Three comparable California communities were the setting of the research. In two of these towns, there were extensive mass media programs for a 2-year period with subjects in one town also

exposed to face-to-face counselling. The third town served as a control. The multi-media campaign consisted of television and radio programming, radio spots, newspaper columns and advertisements, billboards, printed material, and the like. It was designed to produce a wide range of knowledge, skills and awareness related to achieving and maintaining cardiovascular health. "Both the media and media plus face-to-face instruction had significant positive effects on all variables except relative weight after two years of campaigning" (p. 1194).

The medium of television was effectively employed in a smoking cessation program in Finland for a 5-year period beginning in 1972 (McAlister, Puska, Kosekela, Pallonen, & Maccoby, 1980). The media intervention was accompanied by informal self-help groups in the community, and the data unfortunately do not distinguish the impact of these groups on the outcome. In 1980, a more comprehensive national health program was launched in Finland (Puska et al., 1985). It was aimed at diminishing the risk factors in cardiovascular disease by positively influencing health-related lifestyles. The basis of the project was a television program consisting of 15 weekly 35-minute sessions. During the program, a group of eight ordinary volunteers from the community met with two experts, and received advice to assist them in modifying their health-related behaviors. Based on Albert Bandura's (1971,

1977) social learning ideas, the studio group was representative of the population- at-large in terms of gender, age, and professional and social background. Furthermore, each member of the group was a smoker. As the group members discussed their problems and experiences, the expert invited the home audience to do the same, and to compare their own experiences to those of the studio group. Members of the studio group were remarkably successful in increasing their health-related behaviors and reducing their risk factors. The estimated risk of heart disease for the studio participants was reduced to about one third of what it was at the outset. Similar though less dramatic results were found at the national level. "All....self reported effects correlated highly with the number of sessions viewed" (p. 339). Certainly the research left many unanswered questions. Perhaps many of those who made changes in their behavior had been readied for that change by earlier programs. Perhaps self reports of effects were inflated. Maintenance of the effect over time was not determined. In spite of the unanswered questions, the social learning model appears to hold great promise for use in mass media health promotion campaigns.

Contributions from the Mass Media Literature

The mass media literature is extensive, unwieldy, and in a constant state of flux. However, there are some trends and

findings with possible relevance to this research. Klapper's (1960) summary of mass communication effects (cited in Ball-Rokeach & Cantor, 1986) is still widely accepted (Ball-Rokeach & Cantor, 1986; Cassata & Assante, 1979; Lowery & DeFleur, 1983). Klapper put to rest the notion of the immediate and powerful effects of the mass media and, instead, described those effects as highly complex, long-term, accumulative, and embedded in the social context. Causal relationships between attending to a medium and change are extremely difficult to establish, although it is now generally accepted that media effects are much less dramatic than once thought. Lowery and DeFleur (1983) point out that the answer to the question of media effects may be in the creation of more accurate research strategies.

In a similar vein, Rutter's (1987) recent research in the area of cuelessness is also contradicting the findings of earlier research. Until recently, it has been assumed that in the absence of social cues in human interactions, spontaneity decreases and the degree of depersonalization increases. Rutter is currently finding that emotional content of the discussion is also a significant variable. When content is task-oriented, so too will be conversation; however, when the content of the discussion is more personal, psychological distance is decreased, whether or not there are social cues available. Such evidence has significant implications for the

experience of both listener and caller in psychology talk-show programs.

The uses and gratifications literature, as summarized by Katz, Blumler, and Gureirtch (cited in Bierog & Dimmick, 1979), suggests that individuals attend to particular media in accordance with their needs. The implication is that people seek out and use those media which will provide satisfaction or gratification for them (Lowery & DeFleur, 1983). The findings of Bierig and Dimmick (1979) and Tramer and Jeffres (1983), discussed earlier in this chapter, suggest that a primary gratification for callers to radio open-line programs is human contact or companionship.

Conclusion

This review of the literature provided a rich background for the research. The purpose of a literature review in grounded theory is to raise questions as much as it is to answer them, and the questions arising from this review were myriad: Is the process of participating in a psychology talk-show educative, supportive, informative, or all of these, and more? Does participation assist in problem-solving, coping, decision-making? Are listeners and callers seeking help, comfort, companionship? Is the major impact in the provision of social support or the enhancement of knowledge of psychological ways and means? Are the changes experienced, if any, immediate or long-term, direct or indirect? Does the impact

of listening work in conjunction with or in spite of the social context? Does the cuelessness of the radio medium, which also provides for anonymity, help or hinder the process? What *is* the process? What needs does it meet? What in the process gratifies these needs?

The intended purpose of a grounded methodology literature review was accomplished in that the researcher identified the gaps and shortcomings in the current literature, as well as began to develop a rough conceptual framework around the innumerable questions and issues related to media psychology. As the research progressed, and theory grounded in data began to emerge, existing theories were again looked to for fit with the findings of this research. Those connections which were made to the existing theory are reported in the final chapter of this document.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN: RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

Rationale

The research was designed to conceptualize the phenomenon of talk-back radio psychology from the perspective of those who listen. The choice of grounded theory methodology was driven by some notable findings in a review of the related literature which, to date, is primarily descriptive and speculative in nature. Radio show hosts and observers have described their own experiences and observations, and have hypothesized about the popularity and impact of the radio show as a medium for exerting positive influence, using psychological principles. There is, however, an absence of theory to account for the attraction, the significant variables at play, and the effects of listening. Quantitative, instrument-based research must be guided by theory, and that theory has not yet been formulated in this area.

The primary distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is in purpose: quantitative research serves to verify theory, while qualitative research is used to generate new theory, or alternately to provide a "fresh perspective in a familiar situation" (Stern, 1980, p. 20). Field and Morse (1985) suggest that the two approaches are complementary, each with unique strengths and contributions. Qualitative research is not viewed herein as inherently superior to, nor as a replacement for empirical research, but

simply as more compatible with the purpose of this research. In this preliminary, exploratory study, the intent was to generate theoretical constructs which account for the social phenomenon of listening to the radio psychology talk-show; thus the choice of a qualitative approach is consistent with the research question. That choice does not preclude the possibilities of quantitative design in future research to verify the theoretical constructs which emerged in this study.

Grounded theory is, by definition, "the discovery of theory from data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.1), and its purpose is the generation of theory rather than the verification of theory. It was, therefore, the research design of choice for the discovery, exploration, and formulation of a theoretical explanation of the dynamics of the radio psychology talk show. Making sense of the radio psychology world was viewed as a "preliminary, exploratory, and descriptive" (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986, p. 7) undertaking, not as a "final or complete interpretation" (Charmaz, 1983, p. 111).

Since the radio psychology talk-show was an example of "relatively uncharted waters" (Stern, 1980, p.20) theoretically, a strong case existed for the use of an inductive approach to the development of theory from data, as opposed to a deductive analysis of already-existing theory (Charmaz,1983; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Inductive and deductive reasoning are not mutually exclusive activities and,

in fact, occur contemporaneously within most single works (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988). However, inductive movement toward theory which was grounded in data was the primary thrust of this research because "the development of theoretical accounts and explanations which conform closely to the situations being observed" (Turner, 1981, p. 227) was the desired outcome. Such theory will more likely be understood, usable, and correctible by those who are part of the situation under study, in this case, the hosts and the listeners to the show, "That's Living".

The unique methodology of grounded theory is constant comparative analysis which permits "the kind of flexibility that aids the creative generation of theory" (Conrad, 1978, p.102). At the outset of this research, there were many unanswered questions. There was no explanation for the popularity of the radio psychology program, nor answers to the questions, "Why do they listen?" or "What actually happens on the program?" There was no description of the social context of those who listened or called, nor of the conditions under which listeners and callers participated, nor of the consequences of their listening and calling. The complexity of issues and questions called for a rich data base, and for a methodology which did not preclude the examination of new questions as they arose. The constant comparative method met

the needs both for an abundance of data and for simultaneous data collection and data analysis.

Methodological Considerations

Context

The issues of context and setting are distinguishing features of qualitative research. Mishler (1979) argues against "the context-stripping methods of our traditional model of science" (p. 17) when context-dependent phenomena are under scrutiny. In this study, both hosts and listeners were viewed as embedded in exceedingly complex contexts, so much so, that to divorce the acts of delivering or listening to "That's Living" from the myriad of contextual variables of hosts and listeners would have potentially trivialized the respective experiences of each. Thus, this research was conducted in the natural settings of hosts, that is, at work in a studio in the radio station, and of the listeners, that is, the setting in which each typically tuned in to "That's Living". Furthermore, interviews with listeners were embedded in the context of the radio show, which was turned on during each interview. To illustrate, one senior was interviewed in her sitting room where she typically tuned in to the program during her daily rest period. One young professional man was interviewed in his office at his place of employment. One middle-aged couple were interviewed around their kitchen table, on their dairy farm. In all cases, the radio program

could be heard in the background, and the activities of each listener's day were minimally disrupted.

Researcher as Instrument

As a direct result of the vital importance of preserving context in this kind of research, the researcher becomes the key instrument in data collection, on location, where "accurate detailed descriptions" (Field & Morse, 1985, p.76) are gathered (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The researcher, as participant observer, observes, interviews, and establishes credibility in the social context under scrutiny (Field & Morse, 1985; Whyte, 1979). In the radio psychology research, the researcher was a participant observer both in the studio from whence the program originated, and in the homes and offices of those who were interviewed, for a total of approximately 50 hours of participant observation. What the researcher brings to the interview are the abilities to communicate respect to the informant, to suspend judgment and therapeutic intervention, and to keep the interview focussed (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986).

Nature of the Data

Also related to the issues of context and self as instrument are those of data source, form, and analysis. "The data collected is [sic] in the form of words...rather than numbers" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p.28). In this research, tape recordings were made of the 11 radio programs in which the researcher was a participant observer, and of the seven open-

ended interviews conducted with listeners to the radio program. The interviews were then transcribed. The researcher also kept ongoing, comprehensive field notes wherein observations, impressions, surprises, questions, hunches, and the like were documented. So the raw data in this research consisted of more than 32 hours of tape recordings of programs and interviews, 300 pages of interview transcriptions, and a coil note-book of field notes.

Given that the purpose of the research was the creation of theory, and that the raw data were the recordings of programs and the transcriptions of interviews with listeners, along with the researcher's field notes, data analysis was different from that utilized when the purpose of the research is verification of theory and data occur in quantifiable units. The methodology employed by grounded theorists involves the joint collection and analysis of data, that is, data analysis began following the first participant observation of "That's Living" at the radio station, and continued for the duration of the research.

Methodology:

The Constant Comparative Method

Grounded theory methodology is well-established in the literature, and its application to this study is consistent with the guidelines proposed by Bogdan and Biklen (1982); Charmaz (1983); Chenitz and Swanson (1986); Corbin (1986); Field and

Morse (1985); Janesick (1981); Kidder (1981); Maxwell and Maxwell (1980); Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988); Stern (1980); and Turner (1981). Data collection and data analysis occur simultaneously in grounded methodology, so the subheadings referring to sampling procedures, data collection, and data analysis which follow are simultaneous not sequential constituents of the constant comparative method which endures for the life of the research.

The Research Setting

The research was conducted on location, at the radio station during the broadcast of "That's Living" and at the sites where the informants typically listened to the program, usually a home or an office. Interviews with listeners were conducted during the broadcast of the program, with the program audible as the interview progressed.

Davis (1986) and Field and Morse (1985) discuss gaining entry as a process which establishes the researcher's credibility with the research group. The researcher joined the hosts of the radio program on 11 occasions at the outset of the study following a meeting with the manager of the radio station to explain the purpose of the research and to obtain his permission to proceed. Entry to the turf of the listeners was accomplished when the researcher went on air during six of the programs to explain the nature and purpose of the research. Hosts of "That's Living" endorsed and supported the research,

and invited listeners' participation. Listeners who were interested in participating in the research as informants were invited to call the researcher's office at a specified time, later the same day. Explanations as to the purpose of the research and the approach to be used were kept simple but complete so that trust with the participants would be established and creating biases in informants would be avoided. Listeners were invited to participate in maintaining a high standard of programming by sharing their views about the show.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obained from each informant in this research, based on the model provided by Field and Morse (1985) (see Appendix A). The purpose of the research was explained; consent to tape record interviews was obtained; anonymity was assured; and the opportunity to ask questions or to withdraw from the research was provided. All informants were of legal age, and none were part of a "'captive' population" (Field & Morse, 1985, p. 44). No inherent risks in participating in the research were identified.

Sample Selection

Over the one-month period in which participation in the research project was invited, the researcher received calls from 65 listeners, of whom 60 were willing to be interviewed

in their usual place of listening to the program. Those who called to volunteer were asked for the following information: (a) first name; (b) age; (c) whether there were others living in the home; (d) their listening history with the program, i.e., how long they had been listening and with what frequency; (e) whether they were employed outside the home; (f) whether they were urban or rural listeners; and (g) a telephone number where they could be contacted should they be selected to participate in the research.

Sampling, in grounded research, is known variously as "theoretical sampling" (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986, p. 9; Glaser, 1979; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45); "purposeful sampling" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 66; Field & Morse, 1985, p. 95); "selective sampling" (Stern, 1980); or "theory-based data collection" (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988, p. 142). It is distinct from the random sampling procedures used in empirical research. Whereas the purpose of random sampling is "to insure [sic] that the characteristics of the subjects in your study appear in the same proportion they appear in the total population" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 67), the purpose of theoretical sampling is "to advance the theory" (Stern, 1980, p.22).

Because data collection and data analysis occur simultaneously in grounded research, recurrent issues and themes began to emerge very early. For example, at the initial

participant observation of the radio program, the researcher made note of the following activities and functions: the host made use of several opportunities to teach and provide information about human behavior; the host made use of humor to establish rapport with callers; and the host affirmed and validated the experiences of callers numerous times. Theoretical sampling required that these thematic categories be fully exploited by interviewing informants who had "specific characteristics or knowledge which will add to, support or refute...the theory" (Field & Morse, 1985, p. 95).

Initial informants for this research were selected on the basis of guidelines suggested by Field and Morse (1985) and Bogdan and Biklen (1982): a variety of informants, representing the different sectors of the volunteer group were chosen, if they had also presented as receptive to the researcher and relatively articulate in the initial telephone contact. Informants in this research were selected to represent both sexes; a range of ages; both urban and rural dwellers; and a variety of lifestyles, that is, some informants were employed outside of the home and some were not, and some lived alone while others did not. Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988) suggest that initial informants should be selected on the basis of their similarities and the likelihood that they will be representative of the phenomenon under investigation, thus maximizing the probability that categories

will emerge clearly. In spite of the demographic differences among early informants in this research, a strong similarity among them was apparent and that was their shared appreciation of and commitment to listening to the radio program.

As data collection proceded, informants were sought who had the potential to produce "the full range and variation in a category...to guide the emerging theory" (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986, p.9). For example, an early question raised by the observation of the hosts' frequent affirmations of callers related to whether listeners would experience affirmation vicariously, and also whether they would experience it if they were not apparently psychologically needy or living in isolation. Using the principle of theoretical sampling, informants in a wide variety of living situations were interviewed to clarify "variability within the focal area" (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988, p. 142) of experiencing affirmation.

Data Collection

There were two primary sources of data for this research: the radio program itself and the unstructured, face-to-face interviews with voluntary informants. The purpose of the interviews was "to get information in the respondent's own words, to gain a description of situations, and to elicit detail" (Swanson, 1986, p. 66). Because data collection and data

analysis occurred hand-in-hand, and because the informant's experience with listening to the program may have been unanticipated by the researcher, interviews were deliberately open-ended (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Browning, 1978; Field & Morse, 1985; Stern, 1980). Typically, the researcher opened the interview with the question, "Tell me about your experience with the radio program, "That's Living". All programs and interviews were audio-tape recorded, and all interviews were transcribed. The primary sources of the data, then, were 11 of the programs and seven of the regular listeners to the program. An unanticipated source of data for the research were two occasions when the researcher filled in as host of the radio program. The researcher's field notes also served as a vehicle for data collection in that they consisted of written observations, impressions, questions, and hypotheses which were recorded throughout the research. Content of field notes was both subjective and objective. Field notes relating to impressions of interviews with informants were tape recorded immediately following interviews, as the researcher drove away from the interview. Thus approximately 50 hours of formal participant observation and face-to-race interviews, along with countless hours of informal discussions and field note entries comprised the data of this research.

Data Analysis

"The technique which forces investigators to stay close to their data, and which constitutes the systematization of the approach is the constant comparative method" (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988, p. 141). What this means is that "every piece of data is compared with every other piece of data" (Stern, 1980. p. 21). Further, it means that data analysis commences as soon as the initial data have been collected (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986), and that data collection will be "influenced by the outcomes of the emerging analysis" (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988, p. 142). There have been a number of interpretations of Glaser's and Strauss's (1967) original work regarding the handling of data using the constant comparative method. Turner (1981) dealt with the "absence of detailed guidelines for the handling of data" (p. 230) by extracting nine stages in the development of grounded theory from Glaser's and Strauss's work. Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988) delineated a similar though briefer set of procedures modelled on Glaser's (1978) work. The stages of the constant comparative method put forth by Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988) and Turner (1981) were adapted in this research as follows:

1. The initial stage of analysis required the development of categories through analysis of the recordings of the radio programs, the transcripts of interviews with listeners, and

the field notes, paragraph by paragraph. Each recording and transcript was assigned a code, as was each unit of analysis, or complete thought, in each recording and transcript. The question posed at the beginning of each unit of analysis was, "What categories, concepts, or labels do we need in order to account for the phenomena discussed in this paragraph?" (Turner, 1981, p. 232). Labels which arose were noted on consecutively numbered 4 inch by 6 inch file cards along with the identifying transcript and location reference. In the initial stages of analysis, labels were widely varied and very descriptive so that the "fit" (Turner, 1981, p. 232) between the label and the phenomenon was exact. When an additional example of the same conceptual category was identified, it was entered on the same card as previous examples of the phenomena. Some units of analysis were assigned to more than one category using the technique called "open categorizing [which] permits the researcher to preserve nuances of the data and supplies the groundwork for the development of rich theory" (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988, p. 143). As more and more categories were generated, new categories were constructed by the researcher to account for the relationships among the descriptive categories. The "intricate process of reducing data into ...categories" (Corbin, 1986, p. 102) hinged upon the researcher's constant examination, questioning, conceptualization, and manipulation of coded data.

2. As analysis proceeded, it became apparent that no new information was being discovered to explain a particular category, that is, the categories became saturated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988; Stern, 1980; Turner, 1981). In some cases, category saturation began to occur after the analysis of only a few transcripts, while other categories were saturated much more slowly. Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988) suggested that category saturation may occur after 5 to 10 protocols have been analyzed, which was consistent with what occurred in this research.

3. As category saturation advanced, abstract definitions for the emerging categories were created, aided by the activity of memoing which was an ongoing record of the researcher's insights and speculations about the emerging theory (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988; Stern, 1980). Stern (1980) states that "memos linked with other memos, always grounded in the data, enrich the conceptual schemes of the analysis" (p. 23). The sorting and resorting of memos was a vital part of achieving the highest possible degree of integration of theory. The emerging definitions were then used in discussions with colleagues and advisors to ensure that all "links and insights [had] been captured" (Turner, 1981, p. 237).

4. Focus then shifted from the individual categories to the relationships among them in a "movement toward parsimony" (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988, p.144). Some categories

were identified as more central than other categories; some categories were pooled; some were dropped because they seemed only remotely connected to the central categories. The goal of this activity was the determination of the most central or core category which subsumed many other categories and was the most abstract of the categories identified. Ongoing memoing activity, manipulation of cards, and diagramming aided in this process of moving toward a statement of the grounded theory (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Stern, 1980; Turner, 1981).

5. It was at the point of examining the relationships among the categories and identifying the core category that the emergent grounded theory was written up and connections made, where relevant, to existing theory (Turner, 1981).

Reliability and Validity: Trustworthiness of the Study

That researchers in the naturalistic realm have had difficulty adapting the empirical concepts of reliability and validity to qualitative research is well-documented (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Emerson, 1983; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While there is agreement that procedures to assess the adequacy of qualitative data, analysis, and results must be systematized, there have been a variety of responses to the task. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the issue of trustworthiness is critical in both

the positivistic and naturalistic paradigms. Questions about the truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality of results are similar in both realms; however, the responses to the questions are not because each form of inquiry rests on a different set of assumptions. Based on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985), the naturalistic analogues of the conventional research problems of validity and reliability were applied to this research. "The four terms 'credibility', 'transferability' 'dependability', and 'confirmability' are...the naturalist's equivalents for the conventional terms 'internal validity', 'external validity', 'reliability', and 'objectivity' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.301). They have been adopted because the conventional terms are inappropriate given that the purpose, design and outcomes of each research system are clearly different.

Credibility refers to the truth value of the findings. It exists when the findings reconstruct the reality of the respondents in a credible way. The likelihood of high credibility of these findings was enhanced through the following activities:

(a) prolonged engagement, (b) persistent observation, (c) triangulation, (d) peer debriefing, and (e) member checks.

The researcher invested approximately one year learning the culture of the radio psychology show through initiating countless conversations with people who were familiar with

the program, including the hosts, listening to the program regularly, acting as host on two occasions and participant observer on 11 occasions, as well as interviewing informants. In conjunction with this prolonged engagement, the researcher participated in the technique of persistent observation, that is, focus upon the salient features and issues of the radio psychology talk-show was maintained in all related conversations and experiences. The process of sorting the germane from the irrelevant was ongoing. Peer debriefing occurred on several occasions whereby the researcher asked a neutral peer, that is, an individual not assocated with the radio program, to play "devil's advocate" with the biases, meanings, and interpretations evident as the research progressed. Triangulation as a "mode of improving the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305) involved the use of multiple sources of information, that is, information was gathered from the program itself and from listeners to the program. The evidence was considered verifiable only when information gathered from one context was corroborated by evidence gathered from the other. A final means of increasing the likelihood of credibility of the research was member checking which occurred with two of the respondents. These respondents were invited to react to the categories and interpretations which evolved from the comparative analysis.

Judgments about transferability of the research (the analogue to external validity in conventional research) were suspended because whether or not these results would apply in other times or places is an empirical issue, not a naturalistic one. What was provided, however, was "the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).

The problems of dependability and confirmability (parallel to reliability and objectivity in conventional research) were handled through the retention of all records stemming from the inquiry. Included were the categories suggested by Halpern (cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.319): (a) raw data including tape recordings of radio programs and interviews with informants, and written field notes; (b) data reduction and analysis products including data cards and memos; and (c) data reconstruction and synthesis products including category development and category relationships.

IV. CONCEPTUAL CATEGORIES AND EMERGING THEMES

The application of the constant comparative method, that is, the simultaneous collection and analysis of data, to this investigation produced an exceedingly rich, complex, and fluid data base. To capture the movement from words, to conceptual categories, and ultimately to grounded theory, the development of the conceptual categories is followed from the initial coding, through saturation, increasing abstraction, and discovery of relationships among the categories. Temporally, participant observation in the radio program preceded interviews with listeners in this research, so that is where the constant comparative analysis began. When categories related to the radio program were saturated, a second set of data cards were created from interviews with listeners, based on the assumption that the evidence from one source of data would verify the evidence from a second source. The data cards were integrated gradually as analysis progressed through increasing abstraction of the categories, identification of the links among them, and emergence of the theory, grounded in this data. The refinement of 136 conceptual categories supported by 925 pieces of evidence on two sets of data cards through the identification of central themes is the subject of this chapter.

Conceptual Categories Emerging from Analysis of the Program

The tapes analyzed were produced from six "That's Living" programs occurring between May 5, 1988 and May 16, 1988. Half of these programs were conducted by one of the psychologist hosts, and half by the other. The categories identified include information from those field notes accumulated while the researcher was a participant observer at the radio studio during the broadcast of the program. Even though 11 programs were observed and recorded, six only of these were required for analysis because of the rate at which data saturation occurred. Because of the sheer bulk of the data, it is not all recorded here. Description will be thick enough, however, to demonstrate its richness and movement, and "to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). The labels assigned to various phenomena were selected for descriptiveness and exactness of fit.

Analysis of the first tape and related field-notes resulted in the creation of 27 categories in response to the question, "What label accounts for the phenomenon occurring here?" Within these conceptual categories were 64 different examples of their occurrence. Even at this preliminary stage of analysis, themes and trends were apparent. An extensive

sample of conceptual categories, along with a supporting example of each, from the first tape is included here to demonstrate the complexity of the psychology talk program, the range of program host behaviors, and the effectiveness of grounded methodology for teasing out conceptual notions. It will also serve as the beginning point of reference for the comparative analysis. These categories are clustered to reflect the researcher's early memos about themes. Themes were not forced and were assumed to be static at this point.

One prevailing theme on the first tape, suggested by the following categories, related to the *facilitative behavior of the host*:

1. *Self-disclosure/personalizing of the host* (Code #9, 6 examples). The host wished his mother-in-law happy Mother's Day, adding that he had been in alot of trouble the previous year for neglecting to do so.

2. *Challenging listeners/callers* (Code #16, 2 examples). In response to a caller who was complaining about her granddaughter's taste in music, the host said, "I'm on your granddaughter's side in this one".

3. *Honesty of hosts* (Code #19, 1 example). The host said, "I'm rambling here".

4. *Tolerance of opposing points of view* (Code #21,

3 examples). To a caller who did not enjoy hockey, the host said, "I'm such a fan that I have difficulty appreciating your position, yet I know it must be true for you".

5. *Empathizing, supporting and affirming* (Code #22, 2 examples). In response to a caller who felt isolated from his male friends because he did not enjoy team sports, the host said, "As I recall, when I was in construction, you had to talk about sports and poker with the guys" to which the caller responded, "You got it!"

6. *Reinforcing, validating* (Code #25, 1 example). The host said to a caller who was responding to an earlier call, "I'm really agreeing with you; I only wish I had thought of your argument on the last call".

7. *Using humor to make a point* (Code #11, 3 examples). The host said he had received a "my lawyer can beat your lawyer up" letter to make the point that some people never really grow up.

8. *Using anecdotes* (Code 23, 1 example). The anecdote was told to make a point about dedication in spite of low remuneration and concerned the first medical doctor in the North West Territories, who walked vast distances to see patients.

The following categories were suggestive of a theme involving a *sense of community* or perhaps *a mutually beneficial relationship between host and audience:*

1. *Opinions, reactions of audience are important* (Code #4, 8 examples). The host invited listeners to write about their questions, concerns and suggestions and reassured them that even though there is a lot of mail, the hosts would get to all of it.

2. *Sense of community in wide sense* (Code #7, 5 examples). The host said, "I want to give a personal tribute to the Oilers [hockey team]. Haven't they made living in Edmonton more fun and exciting!"

3. *Meeting needs of listeners is important* (Code #8, 3 examples). The host invited the audience to ask any questions or raise any issues.

4. *Hosts convey their pleasure at being there* (Code #12, 2 examples). "I'm delighted to be back", said the host enthusiastically after several days' absence from the show.

5. *Callers feeling a sense of belonging/connection with the hosts* (Code #14, 2 examples). One caller, who was expressing an opposing point of view to the host, said he enjoyed the show a great deal.

6. *Flexibility in delivering the program* (Code #17, 5 examples). The host stated during a commercial, "I'm not getting that many calls. I'm going to switch what I'm talking about."

7. *Hosts rely on calls: anxiety when there is a shortage of calls* (Code #20, 5 examples). The host commented during a

commercial, "I'm really working. This rarely happens. Maybe it's because it's spring. I'll change topics if necessary."

8. *Sense of listeners as a community* (Code #27, 1 example). A caller said there had been a death in the family and she had been assisted in working it through by calling the program. The host told the caller that she was talking to many people and giving them hope by saying she was feeling better.

A third cluster of categories appeared to be related to the *teaching* function of the program. It included the categories labelled as follows:

1. *Teaching* (Code #13, 4 examples). One example was in response to a worried grandmother and related to normal adolescent development as demonstrated by identification with rock music.

2. *Priming comments are well-prepared* (Code #3, 3 examples). The host brought extensive notes and consulted them regularly during the program.

3. *Topics are timely* (Code #2, 1 example). The topic, "Fan Psychology" was aired during Stanley Cup play-off time.

A fourth group of categories related to *radio station idiosyncracies:*

1. *Sense of collegiality among radio station personnel* (Code #10, 2 examples). Both examples involved references to other radio station hosts on air.

2. *Studio is a beehive of activity* (Code #6) as suggested by the "up feeling", sense of energy, hosts anticipating cues and signs, and the coming and going of people in the hallways.

A fifth category stood alone and perhaps enveloped all the others, and that category was labelled, *energy, enthusiasm of hosts*. Significantly, it was the first category coded. Examples of the gesturing, focussing, and commenting which are the constituents of energy were innumerable and continuous.

Following the analysis of the first tape, the researcher made note of the impressive yield of coded categories and of the sense of relationships among them which was already evident. Further, some researcher biases were documented as required by this methodology. "I may be at risk of 'going native' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 303) in that remaining an objective, neutral outsider is tough in the up-beat environs of the radio show, in the company of two powerful media personalities--so far I'm impressed" (field notes, May, 1988).

Analysis of the second radio program tape resulted in the creation of 13 additional categories, and the identification of 41 additional examples of all phenomena. Field notes reflected increasing evidence about the teaching, facilitating, and supporting functions of the program.

Eighteen categories were generated through analysis of the third tape, up in quantity from the last tape because of the

introduction of the second host's style to the data pool. At this point in the analysis, examples related to the category, *teaching*, were becoming increasingly extensive, as were those related to *affirming and validating callers.* Additionally, the theme of *community and social network* was emerging as an important one.

Only three new categories were created during the analysis of the fourth tape. These categories were obscure with a limited number of supporting examples, suggesting that they were less common occurrences during the program. These categories were: (a) *ability to defuse explosive issues*, (b) *diagnosis*, and (c) *use of metaphor to teach.* The dramatic drop in the number of new labels for categories reflected that the data was nearing saturation, that is, no new phenomena were emerging to explain particular categories or to require the creation of new categories.

Saturation of data was further evidenced through analysis of the fifth and sixth tapes. Although six new categories, were created, analysis revealed that each was a variation of an already existing category. For example, *trusts hunch of the caller about what the problem is* was a specific example of the already existing catgegory, *assessment and diagnosis. Hosts disclose biases* was collapsed into the already existing category, *hosts are honest* which was further collapsed into the theme, *self-disclosure/personalizing of hosts.* What was

happening at this point in the analysis was that new, increasingly abstract categories were evolving to account for the relationships among the existing categories.

An example of open categorizing can be drawn from the fifth tape as an illustration of that process as it occurred throughout the analysis of the data. Sometimes, specific examples could be assigned to more than one category of analysis, thus contributing to the creation of a rich data base in which nuances of meaning are preserved. For example, when a divorced mother of a 4 year old complained that the child was rebelling because of messages he was receiving from his father, the host's response was assigned to several categories:

(a) *diagnosis:* "The reason he does it is because it gets a reaction from you"; (b) *teaching:* "a father who sees his son every 3 weeks will have very little influence unless it gets an emotional reaction from you"; (c) *self not other as focus for change:* "Get the bogeyman of your ex out of there and begin to focus on your own relationship with your child";

(d) *strategies for dealing with a specific problem:* "I would not discuss this with your child or show you're even interested; in mom's house we have rules; pay no attention at all to his stories and ignore the tantrums; reward improved behavior"; (e) *challenging caller:* "The reason a 4 year old repeats what his father said is because it gets a reaction from

you"; and (f) *normalizing:* "Four year olds are prone to tantrums". This is not an unusual example of the wealth of interpretations, strategies, interventions, and information conveyed from a position of support, in response to one call.

Following the fifth taped program analysis, the researcher made the following entry in her field notes:

> I have a sense of how the whole phenomenon is interdependent, symbiotic: hosts, callers, listeners, community. The hosts are not doing something to someone. They are highly responsive to and reliant upon a need which is identified minute-to-minute by listeners, cum callers. The context is not the radio program; it is the community. In that larger context, psychological principles, and, dare I say counselling, are applied. The program is *not* counselling in the usual sense. It is an example of counselling with an audience of 25,000. And through witnessing the experience of one person's pain and issues, what is elicited is a sense of community, support, and compassion. The hosts use their knowledge and skills of therapy but what they are really modelling are high level values in the community of man: caring and compassion, tolerance and acceptance, honesty with self and others, open reliance on others, that we are connected, that we need support from one another, respect for self and others, taking care of self,

> and a wide range of emotional expression. This is a fascinating example of learning and change occurring vicariously. (Field notes, May, 1988)

Before moving to the comparative analysis of the interviews with the listeners, a summary of the 68 categories coded during this part of the investigation follows. Although 410 examples of the categories were identified, their sheer bulk does not permit elaboration of them here. These categories are loosely organized into emerging themes which were manipulated and further developed in the final part of the analysis:

1. *Informing function*: (a) teaching the knowledge of psychology, (b) repeating themes, (c) using lay terms to explain psychological jargon, (d) program notes as review and reinforcement in new learning, (e) vast knowledge of hosts, (f) use of statistics and research in imparting the knowledge of psychology, (g) well-prepared priming comments, (h) steps in problem-solving, (i) strategies for dealing with specific problems, (j) responding to requests for information, (k) suggesting reading resources, and (l) recommending referral resources.

2. *Therapeutic activities*: (a) self-disclosure, (b) assessment/diagnostic questions, (c) hypothesizing about cause of difficulty, (d) trusting the judgment of the caller, (e) diagnosing, (f) challenging callers, (g) the self not the

other as the focus for change, (h) normalizing, (i) asking for commitment to action, (j) conveying sense of caring, (k) following up/providing for closure, (l) defusing emotional issues, (m) asking for feedback, (n) reinforcing/validating/ supporting, (o) esteem-building/reassuring, (p) empathizing, (q) reframing, (r) tolerating opposing points of view, (s) giving advice, (t) using humor to make a point, and (u) using anecdotes and metaphors.

3. *Sense of community and connectedness*: (a) opinions and reactions of audience are valued, (b) hosts are welcoming toward callers, (c) hosts convey their pleasure at being there, (d) sense of listeners as a community, (e) callers express appreciation and say they were helped, (f) sense of community in a wide sense, (g) meeting needs of listeners is important (h) hosts reliant on calls, (i) flexibility in delivering program, (j) sense of continuity from one program to the next, (k) one call triggers another, (l) listeners are invited to help out, (m) topics are prepared in repsonse to listener feedback, (n) topics are presented so they have wide appeal, and (o) topics are timely.

4. *Characteristics of hosts*: (a) energy and enthusiasm, (b) ethical in the professional helping community, (c) thrive in the media environment, (d) have vast knowledge and expertise, and (e) inspire awe with ability to "know".

As the analysis progressed from what the researcher observed in the field to what the listeners were saying, the central question was whether one set of data verified the other.

Conceptual Categories Emerging from the Analysis of Interview Transcripts

Selection of Informants

The transcripts analyzed for this part of the study were produced from interviews with seven listeners to "That's Living", conducted in June and July, 1988. Their voluntary participation in the research had been invited during the broadcast of the program by the researcher and by the hosts of the program. The only criterion for participation was that the volunteer describe himself or herself as a "regular listener" to "That's Living", that is, an at least twice weekly listener. While 65 listeners volunteered to participate, the seven who were interviewed were selected on the basis of theoretical sampling: successive informants were chosen based on the likelihood that they would confirm or clarify what seems to be "central and crucial to the phenomenon" (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988, p. 142) as it is unfolding. Since initial participants are chosen according to their potential to represent the phenomena, the researcher analyzed the information obtained when listeners called to volunteer to get a sense of the typical listener, or perhaps more accurately, of

the typical volunteer. At that initial stage, the researcher had a number of biases about who was listening, so it was important to select informants from a base of facts rather than a base of guesses about who was representative. Furthermore, it was critical not to select the most interesting sounding or outlandish of the volunteers since such listeners might tend to be less representative of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The information obtained from the 65 volunteers was sorted as follows:

1. Sex:	(a) females	53
	(b) males	12
2. Age:	(a) under 25	0
	(b) 25-35	16
	(c) 36-45	14
	(d) 46-55	12
	(e) 56-65	17
	(f) over 65	6
3. How long a listener to "That's Living":		
	(a) less than 1 year	3
	(b) 1 to 3 years	12
	(c) more than 3 years	29
	(d) unknown	21

4. Frequency of listening to "That's Living":

(a) once/week	3
(b) 2-3 times/week	10
(c) 4-5 times/week	29
(d) not known	23

5. Employment outside the home:

(a) yes	22
(b) no	37
(c) unknown	6

6. Location:

(a) city	48
(b) rural	13
(c) unknown	4

7. Children at home:

(a) yes	28
(b) no	31
(c) unknown	6

8. Why a listener:

(a) to deal with children more effectively	8
(b) for support and company	7
(c) to hear others' problems	4
(d) interested in psychology	3
(e) informative	17
(f) interesting	5
(g) unknown	19

9. Lives alone:

(a) yes	26
(b) no	39

What this break-down suggested to the researcher was that the listeners to the program were much less narrowly defined than she had anticipated. Accordingly, the researcher ensured that the following characteristics were represented at least once as the comparative analysis progressed: (a) male, (b) female, (c) a listener to the program for at least 3 years, (d) someone who listens at home, (e) someone who listens on the job, (f) a listener from the city, (g) a listener from a rural area, (h) a listener with children, (i) a listener with no children in the home, (j) a listener who lives alone, and (k) a listener who lives with others. These demographic features then were one of the considerations in the theoretical sampling which occurred as the comparative analysis progressed. The other criterion, of course, was the researcher's sense of particular informants' potential to clarify or verify the emerging theory.

The Interview Format

All informants selected had agreed to be interviewed at their usual place of participation in "That's Living". Interviews were all scheduled for one half hour before the program began, that is at 1:30 p.m., on days which were hosted by one of the two psychologist hosts. Interviews were

conducted so that the program could be heard and attended to, where appropriate. Interviews were approximately 2 hours in duration. Informants were asked not to disrupt their usual activities so that in most cases, there were ongoing activities of tending to children and pets, answering the telephone, and greeting other family members who were coming or going. Following are the researcher's typical opening comments for each interview:

> I'd like to hear your views today about "That's Living". Your particular perspective about the show is important to me. The interview won't be structured because I'm not sure just what's important to you. Tell me, what draws you to turn it on every day?

The interviewer would then pursue the observations and comments raised by the informants. As the interviews progressed, some examples of the questions and comments which seemed to prompt varied and idiosyncratic responses included: (a) "Are there any particular programs which stand out in your memory?" (b) "Talk about the similarities and differences among the hosts", (c) What have you learned in your years of listening?", and (d) "What value do you think the program has?"

Comparative Analysis

Anne

The first informant selected was Anne, a 30 year old mother of three pre-schoolers, who lives in a large city in a comfortable, child-centered home. She does not work outside her home although she has a college degree and a profession to which she expects to return when her children are older. Analysis of the transcript of the interview with her resulted in the coding of 41 conceptual categories, with 140 examples of their occurrence. Even at this early stage, as was the case in the earlier analysis of the radio program, some trends were apparent. For example, Anne had experienced the near-death of her premature infant at a time when one of the hosts was also experiencing great personal tragedy. The self-disclosure of the host appeared to provide this woman with the support and validation she required in order to work through her own fear and grief. She mentioned several times that the opportunity to explore feelings and acknowledge her pain was a key for her.

A second apparent trend noted at this early stage of analysis was that the needs the program was meeting for Anne had evolved as she moved through her own life stages. She had become a regular listener several years earlier when she was new to this city, and in a job which required

considerable amounts of time on the road which gave her the opportunity to listen to "That's Living". She listened "to find out what was happening in this community". When she moved out of the work force to be "a stay-at-home mom", she felt isolated from adults, so she listened to "That's Living" "to hear different adults talking about what's happening in their lives". At this stage in her life, she had also become interested in "things to do with young children and husband-wife relationships". What was evident from her reporting was that as her needs changed, so too did her perception of how the program was important to her. The program, then, has appeal for a broad base of people perhaps because the hosts engage in such a diversity of teaching, facilitating, and networking activities.

To provide a point of reference for this part of the research, as well as to depict the depth and movement of the data, an outline of the conceptual categories coded form the interview with Anne and organized by suggested prevailing themes follows.

One thematic area emerging from the analysis of the interview with Anne suggests the experience of a *support network* and *a connectedness with others:* (a) the need for contact with people (11 examples), (b) presence of a support network (2 examples), (c) feeling that hosts are "part of the

family" (12 examples), and (d) perceptions of hosts as having different styles, personalities (23 examples).

A second thematic area concerns *needs met* by listening to "That's Living" as exemplified by the following conceptual categories: (a) challenging myself to see how I would answer questions (1 example), (b) to get a different perspective (1 example), (c) to feel like my life wasn't so bad (1 example), (d) a medium to talk about things (2 examples), (e) to see how other people respond (2 examples), (f) for reassurance that people are getting help (1 example), (g) to find out what's going on in the community (3 examples), (h) the program as a referral source (4 examples), (i) enjoyment (1 example), (j) information (6 examples), (k) program as a trigger for discussion (4 examples), (l) assistance in decision-making (4 examples), (m) for reassurance, validation, and support (1 example), (n) to relate to others with similar experiences (3 examples), and (o) a medium to express feelings (2 examples).

A third thematic area is related to listeners' *perceptions and experiences with getting help:* (a) perceptions of getting help on the radio (11 examples), (b) need for anonymity (4 examples), experiences with counselling (1 example), (d) would you phone in? (1 example), and (e) reactions to people who call (6 examples).

A fourth thematic area emerging concerns the *value and impact of the program:* (a) value of the program (11 examples), (b) programs that had impact (6 examples), (c) most interesting topics (2 examples), and (d) memorable or timely topics (3 examples).

Beth

The selection of the second informant was based on the researcher's hypothesis arising from the inital interview that listeners may be particularly drawn to the program in times of personal distress. With that in mind, the second informant was selected based on her disclosure, when she volunteered to participate, that she was a widow. She also possessed some of the demographic characteristics required for the sample: she was 42 years old and she worked outside of her home in contrast to the previous informant, Anne, who was a decade younger and worked at home. As a result of the analysis of the interview with Beth, eight new conceptual categories were coded. The loss of Beth's mate occurred at the time when one of the hosts experienced a similar loss. In fact Beth was on her way to choose a memorial for her husband when she heard a program entitled "It Hurts to Love" on "That's Living" and was astounded by the similarities between her losses and those of the program host. There were seven examples of the conceptual category, *identification with hosts,* which were identified in this transcript. In the

category, *important learnings,* was the example, "I get assurance I'm on the right track, even when I fly off the handle". And one of eight examples of the conceptual category, *perceived value of program*, offered by Beth was, "I'm looking for guidance, assistance and comfort".

With Beth, as with the first informant, the researcher was struck with the need that human beings have to tell their story, and to have that story validated. Because Beth was still dealing with the grief of the loss of her mate, the dross rate for this interview was considerably higher than for Anne, that is, Anne's interview netted 140 examples of various phenomena while Beth's yielded 66 examples, suggesting that Beth was still needing time simply to tell her story. What was confirmed was that two individuals who had experienced personal trauma and loss made similar uses of the radio program as they were coping. For Anne, the value of the program was in its provision of opportunities to explore feelings "again and again, if you have to". For Beth, the program validated her feelings of indescribable loss and aloneness.

Carl

The third informant was a 31 year old man who does public relations work for a public service organization. Carl has a diploma in radio and television arts and a background in radio. He was thus very sensitive to many of the technical nuances

of the program which other informants may not have been. The selection of this informant was based on his gender and the fact that he is single and lives alone. Further, through theoretical sampling, the researcher was seeking to discover whether there was variability in the theme of experience of loss as the primary basis for attraction to the program. Carl's transcript was dense with 145 examples of various phenomena and it yielded 15 new conceptual categories. A self-described "super-fan", none of his connectedness to the program was related to personal loss. For Carl, listening to "That's Living" is a "relaxing" experience, for two reasons he can identify: voice quality and repeated messages. He uncannily hypothesized that one of the hosts in particular had a background in hypnosis, based on the voice quality (he was accurate). Carl said that even thinking about that voice was relaxing for him because he is a "worry-wart". He also recommended that audio-tapes of the priming comments could be very popular based on his perception that they are both informing and soothing.

Some of the messages which Carl described as life-changing for him concern the theme of how to approach problems in life. Carl stated:

> I listen more generally to what [the host] says about life, not even the specific topics. And [the host] says the same thing over and over again. We've all got our

problems and we need to learn to reframe them and look at them as part of our whole life. Like if you take one little problem and dwell on it, you're not going to do any good for yourself or anyone around you, cause there're a lot of other things going well. For everything that goes wrong in the day there are ten other things that have gone right. But you have to keep telling yourself.

Like the previous informants, the most interesting topics to Carl were related to his personal life stage issues. He is especially interested in topics and calls about dealing with aging parents and with the stress of not being in a permanent relationship, even though he would like to have a family. In spite of these particular interests, he, like Anne and Beth, expressed tolerance of the wide range of calls to the program because, as Beth stated, "They are problems at that particular point in time for someone".

Don and Elsie

These informants were selected because they agreed to be interviewed as a couple; they were in business together (dairy farming); and they lived in a relatively isolated area. Category saturation was in dramatic evidence during this analysis. Only one new category was created, and already-existing categories were becoming rich with a variety of examples of the phenomena. The high dross rate for this interview (only 51 examples of all phenomena) resulted from the anecdotal nature

of Don's responses. What was again very apparent were the themes of being deeply committed to and affected by listening to the radio program, and of participating in the program in a selective way. Since Don and Elsie are parent counsellors for Alberta Social Services, they have four adolescents in their home, including their own son. They are drawn to the program for what they can learn about being more effective parents. They have been listening to "That's Living" since its inception and say that, "It's helped us in every way": they are raising their youngest son differently from their two oldest children. Elsie says, "we have probably listened better, heard him better, understood him better". In addition, Don says, "It's like a light went on inside me when I finally learned that some people think with their hearts rather than their heads". This couple attributes these significant shifts in their lives to regular listening to "That's Living" and to some courses they have taken as parent counsellors. The researcher's hypothesis about their geographic isolation as a determinant of their engagement with the program went nowhere. They are clearly responding to the teaching function identified as a major theme in the delivery of the radio program. In contrast, Anne and Beth perceived the affirming and validating functions as most significant for them while Carl related most intensely to the themes of reframing one's difficulties and learning how to relax.

Mary

Mary is an 80 year old widow who lives with a toy poodle upon which she is clearly reliant for companionship. She is a shut-in in the sense that her health problems severely curtail her activities outside of her home. Even though Mary's focus of interest in the program was somewhat different from what earlier informants reported, only two new conceptual categories were created, both variations on earlier themes. For example, she said the radio program *distracted her from her own worries,* which was collapsed into the larger themes of *needing contact with other people* and *finding out my life isn't so bad after all.* Mary, along with the initial informant, Anne, identified the community information function of the program as important to her: she experiences social isolation because of her poor health and her advancing age, while Anne's isolation was related to feeling house-bound with three pre-schoolers, one of whom was critically ill.

Mary attributed her "broadened outlook" to the learning that occurs when one listens regularly to "That's Living". Most of all, she said, she has been able to accept that her great-grandchildren are not baptized, and for her, that shift has allowed her to stay involved with them. She has a difficult time accepting how different times are from when she was young, and she has derived comfort from learning that it is possible to accept change. In spite of a very different focus of

involvement in the program than earlier informants, Mary too is responding to the themes of *tolerance* and *acceptance of situations outside my control* in much the same way that 30 year old Carl did.

Gertrude

The researcher selected this informant because she represented the 55 to 65 year old listeners. Since analysis of the two preceding interviews had produced very little new conceptualization, albeit a wealth of examples supporting already existing conceptual phenomena, the researcher was looking for additional variability in the categories and themes identified to this point. Once again, while no new conceptual categories were identified, this listener added depth to the already existing category, *to see how other people respond* as a reason for listening. Gertrude acknowledged that she thrives on debate because she grew up in an environment where divergent points of view were encouraged, and those opportunies to debate have been stifled in her marriage. So she is drawn to "That's Living" for the wealth of opinions that are aired.

Summary of Listener Themes

Because the number of conceptual categories had remained static through the analysis of the last three interviews, and because the emergent themes were identifiable, the accumulation of data was interrupted at this point. Before

moving to a summary of the themes emerging from this rich and complex data, a summary of the 68 conceptual categories coded during the analysis of listener transcripts is presented. These categories were supported by 515 examples of their occurrence, and are organized into the themes which were manifest at this point:

1. *Perceptions of value of program:* (a) important learnings occur; (b) helps me with my own issues; (c) I can relate to calls; (d) I can see how others respond; (e) I can challenge myself to see how I might answer the questions; (f) I can gain a new perspective; (g) triggers discussion with others; (h) an opportunity to debate; (i) entertaining, (k) relaxing and calming to listen; (l) helps me in decision-making; (m) a medium for expressing feelings; (n) a medium to talk about things; (o) gives me a good feeling; (p) distracts me from my own worries; (q) helps me in my own job; (r) validating, supporting, reassuring; (s) comforting; (t) information about parenting; (u) makes me feel like my life isn't so bad; (v) enjoyable; (w) makes referrals; (x) informative; and (y) you don't have to wait for very many programs until your own issue comes up.

2. *Sense of community:* (a) listeners' needs for contact can be met or enhanced; (b) presence of support network felt; (c) calls reflect what is occurring in the community; (d) it is reassuring to know that people are getting help; (e) people willing to call once they've heard a call from someone with a

similar problem; and (f) the program brings people closer together.

3. *Perception of relationship with hosts:* (a) hosts described as "part of the family", (b) identification with hosts occurs, (c) hosts are role models, (d) hosts are perceived to have different personalities and styles, (e) listeners have different reasons for listening to each of the hosts, and (f) listeners frequently seek face-to-face contact with the hosts.

4. *Characteristics of listeners:* (a) have listened for a long time, (b) initial attraction to program varied, (c) plan to listen to program as frequently as possible, and (d) carry on other activities of the day as they listen.

5. *Attitude of listeners towards getting help:* (a) feel need for anonymity and fear their voice may be recognized if they called, (b) have all called in to the program on at least one occasion, (c) perceive calling in as a less threatening way to get help than seeking face-to-face counselling, (d) perceive calling in to the program as a legitimate way of getting started in the process of counselling, (e) would be willing to get counselling and may have sought counselling already, and (f) see program as having elements of counselling.

6. *How callers interact with the medium:* (a) respond to voice sound and quality, (b) perceive most host responses as helpful, (c) occasionally disagree with host responses,

(d) occasionally find calls inappropriate or annoying, (e) have an opinion about most calls, (f) have few suggestions for changing the program, and (g) would obtain program notes infrequently on particularly important issues for them personally.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to label the concepts which account for the phenomena occurring in the radio program, "That's Living". The conceptual categories used to label the phenomena were drawn from tapes of the program itself and from transcripts of interviews with listeners about their perceptions of the program. Sixty-eight conceptual categories were drawn from each area for a total of 136 concepts. These conceptual categories were supported by a total of 925 pieces of evidence. Analysis of only six program tapes was required because no new data emerged after the analysis of the fourth program. Similarly, the conceptual categories related to the experience of listeners were saturated after the analysis of only six interviews. Constant comparative analysis occurred which required that data collection and data analysis happen simultaneously. This method allowed for theoretical sampling to occur: as hypotheses about the emerging theory unfolded, informants were selected to test them. As more and more conceptual categories and evidence accrued, sorting and

resorting them was continuous, linkages between them became apparent, and increasingly abstract definitions of concepts were created.

The central themes were identified through the activities of ongoing memoing, manipulation of cards, and diagramming. The memos were written throughout the analysis as reminders of the researcher's hunches and hypotheses. The card format allowed the data to be arranged and rearranged until parsimony was achieved.

Program Themes

The three central themes distilled from the 68 conceptual categories identified in the tapes of the program itself were: (a) *including*, (b) *informing*, and (c) *counselling*. The *including* theme related to the sense of community and connectedness which was the outcome of the way the hosts valued and were responsive to the opinions, needs, reactions, and input of the audience. There were 100 examples of this theme identified in the research. Listeners were repeatedly invited to write, to call, and to participate in many ways. Topics were often prepared in response to listener feedback. Topics were timely, that is, listener needs and experiences may be factors in the timing of various offerings. For example, the topic, "Adolescents at Risk", was presented in the springtime when such at-risk behaviors as running away and truancy are known to escalate. Topics had wide appeal in that the hosts

frequently broadened the scope of an apparently narrow topic. For example, the program, "When Mother is Alone", included messages to grandparents. Flexibility in delivery of programs was also demonstrated. If one tack was floundering, hosts adapted their comments so that listeners who were only peripherally involved in the topic would feel more engaged. The hosts clearly relied on incoming calls to keep the program moving and interesting.

The central theme of *including* was also related to the sense of community in a wider sense. The hosts frequently referred to community events in which they had been involved or were about to be involved; they often announced conferences, resources, or programs in related areas which had come to their attention.

Callers frequently expressed their own experience of being included and involved. Hosts were exceptionally welcoming of callers; they conveyed pleasure at being there, in the studio; they had wide enthusiasm for the topic of the day; and they were open to whatever issues callers might raise. One call often generated another, suggesting again that listeners felt somehow connected with one another. Callers frequently said they were assisted with problems, or called to share their own experiences with an earlier caller's issue, or their support, or their suggestions. The connectedness apparently experienced by listeners surfaced again and again.

The second central theme of *informing* generated 152 examples of teaching, problem-solving, setting out strategies for dealing with specific problems, providing information, repeating themes, and using statistics and research as evidence. Examples of teaching--in this context, imparting knowledge about human behavior-- were numerous. Repeated themes related to the behavioral principles of reward and punishment, normal life stage development in children and adults, and common childhood difficulties, such as attention deficit disorder, tantrums, toilet-training, and stealing, were evident. The "how-to's" of dealing with specific issues, such as school behavior problems, the depressed senior, insomnia, and the middle child, were elaborated many times. Additionally, the hosts provided a wealth of information about resources available in the community and additional readings related to the topics they presented. Their apparently vast knowledge of everything from sleep disorders to shy teenagers, to marital relationships, to psychopathology appears to inspire the confidence of listeners who frequently seek the advice of the hosts.

The third central theme, that of *counselling,* was supported by 138 examples of the facilitative and therapeutic strategies typically associated with counselling. To begin with, assessment/diagnostic questions were frequently identified, along with occasional hypotheses about the nature of the

problem. Hosts engaged in frequent self-disclosure, freely relating their biases and laughing at themselves appropriately. A strong sense of respect for callers and listeners was conveyed, and tolerance of opposing points of view was consistent. Repeated expressions of the hosts' care and concern for callers and listeners were identified. Callers were frequently reinforced, validated, supported, and reassured. Problems were often reframed; listeners were challenged; and childhood behaviors such as tantrums and regression at the time of the birth of a sibling were normalized. Closure to calls was sometimes achieved by asking for a 2-week follow-up phone call or commitment fo follow through on a suggested recommendation. The hosts made occasional use of metaphor to teach. A repeated emphasis on the self, not the other, as the focus for change was noted. Occasional crisis intervention skills were noted as hosts fielded particularly emotionally laden calls.

Listener Themes

There were five central themes abstracted from the 68 conceptual categories which were identified through the analysis of the transcripts of interviews with listeners: (a) *perception of the program as valuable,* (b) *perception of relationship with the hosts,* (c) *a sense of belongingness and community,* (d) *idiosyncratic attitudes toward helping,* and (e) *perceptions of how the program is helpful.*

The theme which emerged as *perception of the program as valuable* was abundant with 211 examples. The range of positive attributions identified as outcomes of listening was extensive. It was apparent that individuals were hearing and experiencing what they needed to be hearing and experiencing at that point in their lives. The message heard by the mother of a critically ill child, "One day at a time", sustained her through a very difficult time. A young man who tended to get over-wrought about the details of his life had come to own a standard suggestion, "Do something for yourself at least once a week". There were many examples of the learning identified as significant in the sample of six listeners. Similarly, the perceived value of the program was described in innumerable ways. In sum, its value appears to be in the forum it provides for people to reflect upon and move toward resolution of the issues in their lives. One listener said, "No matter what problem you've got, they'll hit it in the next month or two, and it may take a couple of years [to finally work it through]". The most interesting or memorable programs were different for each listener. A mother of adolescents was particularly interested in programs about teenagers, whereas a woman approaching retirement and heavily involved in her church was especially attentive to programs dealing with beliefs and values. The specific reasons for listening to "That's Living" were again widely varied. For some, it was to assist in

resolving personal issues and to relate the experience of others to their own lives. There was a desire to know the perspective of others, and to challenge oneself to come up with the same answer as the hosts did. For some, the program served as a trigger for discussion with partners or friends. Still others saw the program as an opportunity for debate. The program was variously described as "interesting", "relaxing", "enjoyable", and "informative". It assisted some listeners in decision making. It was a medium to express feelings, as well as a medium to talk. Some were distracted from their own worries by listening and others were left feeling their own life was not quite so bad. Others felt assisted in doing their own work, both outside the home, as in dealing with people, and inside the home, as in raising children. Several said they felt reassured and supported by their experience of listening to the program.

The theme related to the *perception of relationship with the hosts* was supported by 104 examples. There was a strong sense on the part of listeners of the hosts as "friends of the family", as familiar, trustworthy individuals to be sought out in times of confusion or stress, "someone just to talk things over with", as one listener commented. Listeners gave many examples of identifying with the experiences and idiosyncracies of the hosts. More than one listener was profoundly touched by the loss of one host's partner. Others

identified with traits of the hosts such as sense of humor, voice quality, and tendency toward impatience. One identified the hosts as desirable role models: "If there were more people in the world with attitudes like the doctors, [the world would be a better place]". Listeners clearly saw the hosts as having different styles, strengths, strategies, and points of view. Yet they seemed to concur with one view expressed, "Three distinct personalities add so much to the program". Each of the hosts was rated as a personal favorite by some of the listeners, but not to the exclusion of listening to the other hosts.

The third listener theme identified was related to the *sense of belongingness and community* expressed by the listeners to "That's Living". This conceptual theme was supported by 59 examples. Those listeners who felt isolated in their lives, such as a stay-at-home mother and a housebound senior, identified finding out what is happening in the community as one of the more important needs met by listening to the program. "A single man hypothesized, "I have a feeling that's why I use [the show] a lot because I don't have a lot of support". Listeners also conveyed a sense of feeling some connection with people in need or pain and felt reassured that the program provided support.

The fourth theme emerging from the analysis of listener tapes related to *attitudes toward getting psychological help*,

both on and off air. There were 120 examples of this conceptual area. Significantly each of the six listeners had called in at one time or another. A typical perception of calling in was that for some people it is the beginning of the process of getting assistance. Some did not trust the anonymity of calling, in that their voices had been recognized by other listeners in the past. So those that were interviewed tended to call about minor rather than major issues. Two-thirds of the sample had sought counselling in the time since they had begun to listen to the program. The willingness of the very committed listeners to the radio program, who comprised this sample, to seek help was positively influenced by their regular listening, according to their reports. It is not likely that two-thirds of the estimated 25,000 listeners to "That's Living" at any given time seek counselling but rather that in times of personal difficulty, committed listeners may be more likely than non-listeners to consider counselling as an option. Only one of the sample felt any qualms about seeking help when faced with problems because of the stigma attached to seeing a psychologist or psychiatrist, and this was an 80 year old woman who may have been expressing the attitudes of her era.

The final theme gleaned from the listeners related to *perceptions of how the program is helpful* was supported by 115 examples. Listeners described hosts as empathetic,

patient, and caring. Techniques identified by listeners included repetition of important themes, reframing problems, encouraging expression of feelings, giving practical suggestions, generalizing issues of callers to involve listeners, and helping callers relax. Voice quality emerged as a key to impact. It was fascinating to note that some listeners perceived one of the hosts as more caring by his voice quality, and some perceived the other as more caring, using the same criterion! Half of the sample had made use of program notes. One person recommended that taped program notes would be helpful both to inform and to relax. The most common response to the question, "What changes would you make to the program?" related to time constraints. For example, one suggestion was to eliminate commercials at the end of the show so callers would have time to complete their issue. In a similar vein, one listener wanted to see the program run a half hour longer. Someone else, a shut-in senior, wanted to hear "That's Living" on the weekends. Criticisms were related to worries about whether callers who seemed to be at risk were followed up. There were many accolades for the program in response to the question, "What changes would you make?".

The final stage of the research is grounding the themes arising from this rich and complex data in theory. The theory began to emerge with the identification of central themes.

The integration of the program themes and the listener themes is addressed in the final chapter, as a grounded theory of radio psychology.

V. A GROUNDED THEORY OF RADIO PSYCHOLOGY

The data of this research were categorized, conceptual categories saturated, links among categories determined, and core categories or themes identified. Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988) state that a core category "is typically an abstract category but it is not vague" (p. 144). It is characterized by its sensitivity to new information and its connectedness with many other categories. Because it is so densely related to all other categories, it typically emerges late in the analysis. The categories of *including, informing,* and *counselling* which were distilled from the analysis of the radio program itself met these criteria as did the core categories which emerged from the data supplied by the listeners:

(a) *sense of inclusion,* (b) *awareness of new learnings,* and (c) *sense of being in relationship with hosts.* Each of these categories can be described as sensitive to new data and connected with many other categories.

Turner (1981) points out that initially in grounded research a large number of categories are generated but the language soon becomes repetitive and the linkages among categories apparent. Through writing and card sorting, the relationships among categories were crystallized in this research. Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988) further suggest that the "main repository of the analyst's interpretive activity is the

research memo" (p. 145), and that was the case with this research. Turner (1981) adds that "when the emerging relationships are specified, they form the nucleus of a theoretical statement which...may not be very elegant, but which nonetheless has as its major attributes a closeness of fit....[and] a degree of complexity" (p. 240). Following is a theoretical statement of the relationships among the core categories emerging from the analysis of the talk-back radio psychology program:

> The hosts of the radio psychology program, "That's Living", provide opportunities for new learning and personal growth for listeners by establishing themselves as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and caring, and by creating a sense of community among listeners. Listeners experience a sense of belonging in the community of those who listen. They feel valued and affirmed by the hosts, and open to and supported in their efforts to change. As hosts repeat themes and principles, listeners experience shifts in their own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Listener engagement with the program is selective; that is, listeners are likely to hear just what they need to hear to meet their needs at that point in their lives.

Turner(1981) said that one advantage of using the grounded approach is that emerging themes tend to complexity, rather

than simplicity, and his prediction is apt for this theoretical statement. First of all, the phenomenon of listening to a radio psychology program was examined from two perspectives, that of the message bearer and that of the message receiver. That dual perspective created two different, though complementary, sets of core variables. What the proposed theory is thus able to incorporate is the experience of the relationship which exists between host and listener, and that, perhaps, has been the most elusive aspect of the phenomenon.

The theory, then, was grounded in the data which emerged from the analyses of the program itself, the transcripts of interviews with committed listeners to the program, and the field note entries arising from the researcher's participant observation. These data indicated that the hosts engaged in a multitude of facilitative behaviors. The hosts were self-disclosing and congruent. They were empathic, warm, and caring. They consistently suspended their judgment of callers. Listeners, in response, described a sense of being in relationship with the hosts, or, as expressed by one informant, experienced a desire to talk things over with the host(s) when faced with difficult personal issues or decisions. Listeners viewed the hosts as reliable, trustworthy, and consistently caring. They also identified specific behaviors such as a comfortable, relaxing voice quality and a patient, respectful

manner as determinants of the quality of their engagement with the hosts.

A further theoretical notion which was grounded in the data related to the sense of community and inclusion provided by the hosts and in response, experienced by the listeners. The hosts frequently invited involvement and input from listeners. They also disclosed their own professional and personal activities in the community. There was ample evidence of listeners' needs and input as primary determinants of programming. Listeners, in turn, described a sense of awareness of what was happening in their community, and of being connected not only with the experiences of the hosts, but also with those of callers. Some expressed concern about particularly traumatic calls; another described appreciation that assistance was available for those in need. For some of the listeners, their own sense of social isolation imposed by ill health, child rearing demands, or living alone was diminished by their experience of inclusion and involvement in the community as they listened to "That's Living".

The third significant theoretical notion which was grounded in data related to the high number of teaching and informing activities engaged in by the hosts, on one hand, and the high degree of learning reported by the listeners, on the other. In the analysis, literally hundreds of examples of teaching and informing were identified. Much of the teaching and informing

was related to specific themes or issues, such as caring for elderly parents, or living with rebellious adolescents. Several informants identified the repetition of a particular message or theme or set of guidelines for handling a problem as having significant impact on their knowledge or attitudes.

The final part of the theory which was grounded in the data referred to the selectivity of the involvement o listeners. In fact, one of the informants, whose feedback about the consistency of the findings with her own experience was solicited, reported being impressed with how such a widely diverse group of informants could share the experience of having their own needs met and issues addressed by listening to the program. Informants' descriptions of their lives were unique and so were their responses to the program. They individually reported that their own needs and issues shifted with time and their own effort. Subsequently, informants were tolerant of, if not genuinely interested in, programs and calls which were not currently relevant for them.

Evaluation of the Grounded Theory

Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988) propose four criteria, summarized from Glaser (1978), for evaluating the grounded theory. First of all, the proposed theory explains the phenomenon under scrutiny in a plausible way. That hosts establish an environment where listeners feel supported in their efforts to grow and change is believable, and is in fact

demonstrated by the findings of the research. Secondly, the proposed theory is a comprehensive one. No significant pieces of the data arising from the analysis have been omitted. Thirdly, the proposed theory has been systematically grounded in the data. And finally the theory is clearly applicable to the radio program under scrutiny, and may give rise to future investigations.

Turner (1981) says that an advantage of using grounded theory is that "explanations...conform closely to the situations being observed, so that the theory is likely to be intelligible to, and usable by, those in the situations studied" (p. 227). The complexity of the theory is likely to "enhance [its] appeal and utility" (p. 227) rather than detract from it. Initial feedback from two volunteers who were asked for critical feedback regarding the emerging themes was that their own unique experiences were, in fact, captured. Given a population of 25,000 listeners at any given moment, simple explanations would likely not account for the complexities at play.

The issue of researcher bias will undoubtedly be raised given the unabashedly favorable findings of this research. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) point out that qualitative researchers "objectively study the subjective states of their subjects" (p. 42). The length of time spent in the compilation of data, the detailed rendering of that data, and the researcher's confrontation of her own biases, by making

detailed entries in field notes, mitigate against biased results. As Field and Morse (1985) suggest, what is reported are the *perceptions* of listeners to a radio program and perceptions are inherently biased. Those biases, however, are reported in an objective fashion. In face of criticisms of lack of representativeness of sample, very simply, the sample was set out to represent only the experiences of those listeners therein. The theory accounts well for the experiences of those listeners who volunteered to talk about their experience with the radio program.

Fit With Existing Literature

The researcher began this study with a bias against finding that a function of the program was the provision of counselling because of the remote likelihood of therapeutic change occurring in a 4 to 10 minute phone call. That listeners would experience therapeutic movement was not anticipated. Yet, the research provides mounting evidence that: (a) listeners report change and growth, and (b) hosts engage in facilitative behavior. Brammer and Shostrom (1982) present counselling as "a problem-solving process involving many decisions and actions" (p. 98). The sequential steps they identify are: (a) stating concerns and establishing a need for help, (b) establishing the relationship, (c) determining goals and exploring alternatives, (d) working on problems, (e) facilitating awareness, (f) planning a course of action, and (g)

evaluating outcomes and terminating. What this research suggests is that listeners sometimes move through these steps vicariously, as they listen to the program continuously in the milieu of their life experience. It might be argued that the change would have occurred apart from listening to "That's Living". What is signifcant is that listeners themselves attribute their movement to participation in the radio program. For example, one informant reported moving through grieving the loss of her mate, simply by participating as a listener in "That's Living". Another reported dealing with his insomnia by putting to practice some of the suggestions he heard on the program. A third coped with the near-death of her child by listening to the radio program, and a fourth came to accept the loss of her grand-children from her community of faith because they were not baptized. A couple reported parenting their youngest son in a less harsh, more understanding manner. That these individuals are moving through the phases of exploration and action suggested by Brammer and Shostrom (1982) is suggested by the findings of this research. A central means by which that movement seems to occur is through the listener's perception that the hosts are trustworthy, credible, attractive, and expert, qualities suggested by Brammer and Shostrom (1982) as central to therapeutic movement.

A review of counselling and psychotherapy literature is not intended for this research. It is apparent, however, that some

of the central elements of the therapeutic process, are part of what listeners to the radio program experience. What is also suggested is that the relationship with the hosts is much wider and very different from the classic therapeutic relationship. It is one-sided, that is, hosts have no first-hand knowledge of individual listeners. And it is more than a two-person relationship not only in that more than one host is involved in the relationship that brings about change, but also in that listeners and callers feel support and compassion from and for other listeners and callers.

One of the listeners to the program expressed his experience with listening to "That's Living" as follows:

> It's probably similar to going to counselling sessions....if something does apply to you, somewhere in the program, somebody's gonna get pretty close to what you're feeling...and going through that particular day. You listen to it and you come away like you've let it out just by listening to it.

Not only does this man point to an experience akin to what might be described in counselling but he also suggests that individuals look for and discover in the program what is necessary for them to meet their own needs.

Many of the hypotheses in the existing descriptive literature about various psychology talk programs are borne out by the research. While it is true that the program fulfills

an educational function for listeners as suggested by Paterson and Janzen (1987b), the role of the hosts is also perceived as therapeutic by listeners. Grasha and Levi (1983) also identified the educational function of talk-show radio as central. What was also corroborated was the support that listeners experience, simply by listening to the program. Ricks' (1984) hypothesis about the role of social support as significant was verified. He also suggested that the traditional role of psychotherapy was significantly limited in media settings because of the absence of contractual arrangements between client and counsellor. What this research suggests is that change and growth occur in the perception of listeners, and that it arises from their perception of a supportive, empathic connection with the hosts.

The uses and gratifications theory from the mass media literature is verified in this study in that individuals who listen to "That's Living" attend to it in accordance with their own needs. The couple with adolescent children listens for information about adolescents; a woman whose husband has died says she looks for assurance and comfort; a woman whose child is critically ill listens so that she will be able to "live one day at a time", and so on. What listeners attend to changes as their life stages unfold, and as their issues are resolved or left behind. A second need which appears to be gratified by

listening to "That's Living" is the need for human contact as has been suggested by research cited earlier in this document (Bierog & Dimmick, 1979; Tramer & Jeffres, 1983).

This research supported the recent findings about mass communication effects in as much as listeners did not describe the program as having immediate and dramatic effects. Rather, they reported that shifts in their awareness and behavior occurred over time and were very much embedded in their social contexts.

The findings of this research may be at odds with recent media research regarding the absence of social cues in human interactions. In the cuelessness model research, the emotional content of the discussion has been found to be a significant variable in the degree of psychological distance experienced by participants who are connected only by voice (Rutter, 1987). In the radio program research, listeners reported that voice quality was the singularly most important determinant of their attraction and involvement. They felt more engaged if voice quality projected sincerity, calmness, or caring. Certainly the highly emotional content of the program may be one basis of the involvement of participants, but voice quality is what listeners identify as a hook for them.

Limitations and Implications of the Research

Whether or not this research is generalizable in the conventional sense is a moot point since the purpose of this

and all grounded research is to understand the experience of a particular group at a particular point in time. The research was successful in that regard. The rich data produced, and the theory which is grounded in that data add significantly to knowledge about the nature of the effects of participation as a listener in a talk-back radio psychology program. The preliminary exploratory nature of the research may be viewed as a limitation in as much as verification of these findings by more conventional research means may be warranted.

Many questions and issues emerge from the research. The informants in the research clearly ascribed personal change and growth to the experience of listening to "That's Living" as they reflected upon that experience retrospectively. The results of a longitudinal study measuring effects over time of listening on nonlisteners who become listeners might be a means of verifying this emerging theory of radio psychology. Since all of the informants in this research perceived the program in a very favorable light and were committed listeners; the comments and experiences of less favorably disposed participants in the program would enhance the knowledge of media psychology in an important way.

In the interests of preventing media psychology casualties, the creation of electronic media ethical standards and the preparation of host practitioners are two issues which require the ongoing attention of the psychology profession. The

findings of this research suggest that ethical problems have been circumvented by a station management policy of noninterference in "That's Living" programming, by a collegial and inter-disciplinary approach to hosting the program, and by continuing public acknowledgement and respect for all members of the helping community by the hosts. Seeking formal input and feedback through the related professional associations might be an additional avenue for ensuring ethical integrity.

The psychology profession must also address the challenge of the preparation of practitioners who can capitalize on this unprecedented opportunity to exert positive influence with the growing body of psychological knowledge. The vast knowledge, experience, and expertise of the hosts was identified many times during the course of the research and seemed to be the foundation of what some described as their charisma and influence. The problem of preparation of media psychologists may be related more to the credibility borne of longevity and demonstrated social responsibility in the field than to the acquisition of knowledge in the conventional sense.

The positive implications of the research are far-reaching. The psychology talk-back program appeals to people who would not typically seek professional assistance for personal problems. Yet many who are outside of the reach of mental health services can benefit from some exposure to the

principles of psychological health. The unique blend of psychology and education which the radio program offers is palatable for many who do not see themselves as needing assistance. And their involvement in listening may bring about gradual shifts in attitude and with that an enhanced quality of daily life. At the same time as listeners may feel and begin to live their lives in a more empowered way, their resistance towards receiving psychological help may be softening. The implications for cost effective community mental health programs are considerable. Not only do programs such as "That's Living" result in enhanced quality of life for individuals but perhaps inroads are being made into traditional attitudinal barriers about mental health and illness. The research produced evidence that the listening community is also a caring and accepting one. It also demonstrated that the hosts of such programs are potentially formidable agents of change in the community.

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research Title: Understanding Talk-Show Radio Psychology

Researcher: Marilyn Phelan, M.Ed.
Chartered Psychologist

Co-Supervisors: Dr. Henry Janzen, Professor
Dr. John Paterson, Professor
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Alberta

This is to certify that I, _____, hereby
(print)
agree to participate as a volunteer in this research project. The purpose of this research is to understand the phenomenon of talk-show psychology from the perspective of both listeners and callers to the radio show "That's Living".

I consent to be interviewed, and for the interview(s) to be tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. I understand that the tapes will be erased at the completion of the research. I further understand that my comments may be published but that my name will not be disclosed at any time.

I understand that I may refuse to answer any of the questions asked, or withdraw my consent to participate at any time. I also understand that I am free to ask questions about the research, and that these questions will be answered to my satisfaction.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Signature of Researcher

_____
Date